



PHIL BREDESEN  
THE GOVERNOR OF TENNESSEE

6 August 2003

The Honorable Barbara Cubin  
Chairperson  
House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources  
1626 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cubin:

It is with great interest that Betsy Child, Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, and I submit our comments on the issue of congressional reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund (AML).

We strongly support reauthorization of the AML Fund for the benefit of Tennessee's rural environment and economy. We further encourage Congress to support measures that will increase Tennessee's annual appropriation so that we can hasten our urgent work in protecting Tennessee citizens and our environment.

Your Committee recently began new hearings concerning the reauthorization of the federal Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund. The fund makes the reclamation of abandoned mines possible in Tennessee and 25 other states. This public safety and environmental program has been tremendously successful for 25 years and will expire in 2004 if not renewed by Congress.

The Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund has enabled Tennessee to correct a wide array of public health and safety hazards. Annually, we have reclaimed about 200 acres of abandoned mine lands, restored polluted streams, and eliminated safety risks from dangerous shafts, unsafe highwalls, and contaminated wells.

We consider the allocation of Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation funds a necessary investment in rural communities struggling with the consequences of past mining practices. By correcting past harm, reclamation efforts increase the value of the land, thereby increasing the tax base for the county. The reclamation work itself translates into jobs and the use of local goods and services in impacted counties.

We urge Congress to reauthorize this legislation and enable the federal Office of Surface Mining to expand Tennessee's reclamation appropriation by paying out a greater share of the AML fees actually collected by the national government each year. These additional funds will allow us to continue work already begun and to fully address the almost 10,000 acres of high priority abandoned mine sites awaiting reclamation in Tennessee.

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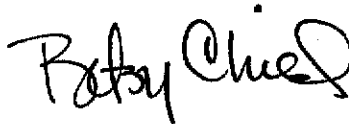
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Congressional reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund is an issue of great importance to Tennessee. We appreciate your willingness to include our statement as a part of your Committee's record.

Sincerely,



Phil Bredesen  
Governor  
State of Tennessee



Betsy Child  
Commissioner  
Department of Environment and Conservation

cc: U.S. Representative Ron Kind, Subcommittee Ranking Member  
U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander, Tennessee  
U.S. Senator Bill Frist, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Marsha Blackburn, 7<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Jim Cooper, 5<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Lincoln Davis, 4<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative John J. Duncan, Jr., 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Harold Ford, Jr., 9<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Bart Gordon, 6<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Bill Jenkins, 1<sup>st</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative John Tanner, 8<sup>th</sup> District, Tennessee  
U.S. Representative Zach Wamp, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Tennessee